

The Sport and Recreation of Our Presidents

By CARL SCHURZ LOWDEN

IN THE good old days the racing of horses was the favored sport of kings. In those same old days horsemanship was the favored sport or amusement of our Presidents. But alas and alack, how times have changed!

Thirty years ago there were two or three golf courses in the entire United States, and the few persons who played were regarded as deluded, soft-brained individuals by the rest of us. Then after Roosevelt's Administration the game came into its own. Taft played regularly. Until his illness Wilson could be seen on the Chevy Chase course almost daily. When Harding moved into the White House he took his golf clubs along. Now golf is IT, the sport of Presidents.

The new tenant does the 18 holes in 100, courteously speaking. But the President's caddy does not speak in that style. He brazenly names 110, and he broadly hints at 120. It takes a caddy, you know, to analyze a man's game. He says Harding is chesty. What of it? Are not all golfers a bit chesty now and then?

Notwithstanding that the presidential caddy does not greatly esteem the presidential game and is, in fact, a harsh critic, Harding might be a lot worse as a player. The caddy himself admits that. The President drives straight, carries through, and keeps his eye on the ball.

Harding displays intense interest in the game. He plays to win. Former President Wilson played just for the exercise, and he did not care how many strokes he required to get over the course. Nobody ever kept score on him. Taft spent hours on the links, and improved his game.

Cleveland liked to hunt ducks. He also liked to take a boat and bait and hie himself away to some side stream to capture the finny tribe. Roosevelt, the apostle of the strenuous life, went in for tennis and boxing and hunting big game.

Harding's principal sporting activities are four in number, with golf ranking first and fishing probably next. He admires a good dog and appreciates its companionship. With him it's almost a case of "Love me, love my dog." The White House kennels contain two now. The President also takes to the plebian sport of pitching horseshoes. Back in Marion, Ohio, he was one of the town champions; but he is a bit out of practice now, because there is something about the game that does not fit with the presidential rôle.

When Wilson was President he golfed because he liked the diversion. He golfed at times when his critics thought he ought to have been doing something else. May we go back a bit but preserve the present in tense at least? It is during the Wilson Administration that the coal miners wax dissatisfied and go out on strike. Meanwhile the President plays on the green.

The Washington correspondent of the *Metropolis Tribune* writes his daily story. He describes the President as receiving the news quietly, then motoring out to the course with a secret service man on either side of him. It is a good story, full of human interest.

But the correspondent does not write the headlines. Somebody on the *Tribune* staff does that. Consequently when a certain subscriber's son goes out to the front porch and brings the paper to said subscriber's wife, she quickly glimpses the top of the right column whereon is blazoned the fact that the

PRESIDENT PLAYS GOLF AFTER COAL MINERS QUIT

"That's a pretty time to hit them balls around," she tells Friend Husband. "It appears to me he ought to stick to his knitting."

"It doesn't sound right to me either," he asserts. "If we don't get coal, we're likely to freeze. That's the long and short of it."

Nor do those headlines make a pleasing impression at the house next door. The President was elected solemnly to the highest office to preserve and protect the people; when the miners are out is no time to play. Thus he is roundly condemned for his remission.

But the house across the street is the home of a charitable man, a business man who plays golf and smokes a pipe and takes life as it comes. His daughter protests the President's act. Father defends in this manner:

"There's a heap of difference between theory and practice. I used to sneer at golf until I got to playing. Now it helps me in my business. When a knotty question comes up, I take my clubs and go to the links and solve it as I let drive. I return refreshed and on top of my job. It's a blamed sight easier that way than for me to sit down at my desk, chew on a pencil, and try to think. I wouldn't be surprised if the President named a member of his arbitration board every time he holed the ball; and when he got back to the White House all he'd have to do would be to drop half of them and he'd have his board ready made."

Harding knows the value of play as a means for keeping fit. He feels that the heavy responsibilities of the position and its natural tendency toward the formation of sedentary habits can be lessened by zestful diversions which bring relief from the irksome routine.

Harding should beware, for fishing is a dangerous amusement if the man in the White House desires to remain there throughout two terms. Franklin Pierce is an example. Grover Cleveland managed to obtain two terms, but not consecutively. Both John Adams and his son, John Quincy, had to be content with a

single term. Apparently the American people do not fancy an Izaak Walton as chief executive, though they are not severe on golfers and hunters.

John Quincy Adams was a versatile fellow. He was an adept swimmer. He had a whole line of amusements or diversions from the cares of state. These fads or recreations included swimming, fishing, gardening, horsemanship, evenings (as he noted or jotted down in his voluminous diary) "filled with idleness or at the billiard table," and the book itself on which he would spend several minutes, or as much as one or even two hours to set forth the day's work with a wealth of interesting details.

Though a conformist and a follower of precedents, John Quincy Adams, the horseman—swimmer—gardener—billiardist—diarist—fisherman, was the first President to utilize a fork as a dining aid and to desist from the custom of pouring tea or coffee into a saucer for cooling it. His wife judiciously explained away her husband's queerness to the guests who, of course, believed in the known efficiency of the knife. "Mr. Adams," she humbly told them, "learned to eat with his fork while in France, and he cannot overcome the habit."



"Love me, love my dog." This intelligent black fellow, however, is just a Harding acquaintance begging a crust of bread.

John Quincy's father, John, relished a good swim; and he never refused an invitation to take a turn with the rod and line.

Another fisherman, Franklin Pierce, was considered quiet in his tastes. Another hobby was parsimony in the eyes of his detractors and thrift in his own; his savings from his four years of salary checks made the neat sum of \$50,000.

The emulation of Izaak Walton cost Grover Cleveland dearly, for in 1888 the people apparently thought he really would rather be an expert fisherman than to continue as President; so they retired him. But in the next campaign Grover managed to convince them of his sincerity, and he was rewarded with reinstatement.

"Try, try again," is a fair motto. It worked for Cleveland and it worked for John Adams, who failed in his first attempt; but poor John Quincy, consistently defeated, had to be put over by the House of Representatives. Apparently aspirants to re-election should leave the rod alone.

Probably Martin Van Buren's hobby was the oddest any President ever possessed. Fond of luxury and elegance, both Congress and the people soon regarded him as too autocratic, too kingly in his tastes. Some desire made him write scathing criticisms of himself and his Administration. He signed assumed names and paid for the insertion of these contributions in newspapers. Then he slyly sat back and laughed in his sleeves while he noted the reactions of his friends, also his enemies, toward these bits of self-manufactured vitriol. Queer hobby, wasn't it, that old Martin rode? But he got pleasure out of it and relaxation from his arduous duties.

"A withered little old applejohn" was the unkind descriptive phrase that Irving applied to James Madison who, though unsuccessful in the defense of the Capitol City against the British in 1814, had a noble wife, Dolly. She rescued the White House silverware and the masterful Stuart portrait of the first President.

James delighted in roses, and he used his odd moments in the cultivation of them. One of his creations, the Madison Meadows, proved itself a rival of the Nellie Custis roses at Mount Vernon. William McKinley harked back to the Madisonian days, for he, too, loved flowers. On each anniversary of his birth we wear a carnation, his favorite bloom, in his memory. He had another hobby, croquet, and was pardonably proud of his prowess as a player.

In the cosy family dining-room President Garfield often essayed the rôle of the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" by plying his children with questions and making explanations in the manner of Socrates. He could also do a few gymnastic stunts.

His predecessor, Rutherford B. Hayes, derived much amusement from riding horseback and raising chickens. In addition to these diversions, he also enjoyed peering about or rummaging in old shops and stores with the hope of finding antiques.

Which of the entire 27 Presidents stands out as the champion smoker? On the battlefield or off, in the White House or outside, General Grant was not General Grant if he had no cigar. He practically lived with the weed. Andrew Jackson was also a proficient smoker, but he preferred a pipe.

Jackson was the Roosevelt of his time in the number of hobbies that he rode. He never overlooked an opportunity to see a horse race or to trade horses. He also liked cock-fighting, wrestling and boxing.

George Washington was born with a love of horse racing and horses. In his own letters he confessed that he joined in the fox chase and also hunted wild game with the greatest of pleasure.

The favorite diversion of Thomas Jefferson consisted in driving a pair of splendid bays or, if not that, in riding his horse, "Wildair." That is a significant name, as he liked both the animal and the broad outdoors.

When General Taylor was chosen by the voters to hold the highest office within their power to bestow, he did not leave his old habits at home upon coming to the city of Washington. He had long done his own marketing; so early each morning he could be seen with a basket on his arm as he went from one butcher to another to bargain for a steak or other cut of meat. If he had bargained less persistently for meat, vegetables and fruit, he might have served out his term. Because of the inferior quality of the cherries which he bought July 3, 1850, and ate the following day, he fell sick and died within a week.

William Henry Harrison, the Indian fighter who preceded Zachary Taylor into the White House by eight years, also had a noticeable penchant for doing his own marketing. This desire for economy was his Nemesis, for it resulted in his death. He caught a cold from exposure during one of these searches for bargains, and he succumbed shortly thereafter. A contributory cause, however, was the ordeal of handshaking during the campaign, following the election, and after the inauguration.

No spurs were needed for "honest Abe" Lincoln to prod his hobby of humor into action. It served as a relief from the serious business of war. The right joke will ease any stressful situation, and none knew this truth better than the ungainly man in the White House. Just before he discussed his emancipation proclamation with the members of his Cabinet he read a selection from a funny book. He chuckled over the bit, turned about in his great chair, and then frankly told his friends:

"Gentlemen, I would surely die if I could not laugh occasionally."

President Harding has to a marked extent this Lincolnian knack of offering an anecdote or joke to illustrate any point of a conversation he may wish to throw into or under the spotlight. The friends of W. Gamaliel affirm that he can come back with a story invariably better than the other fellow's. Humor breeds good humor and harmony, and the Harding Administration will be, almost assuredly, a restful one.

Theodore Roosevelt was blessed with a number of hobbies, which an old chronicler long ago described as "excellent horses which have not the same pace that other horses have in their course, but a soft and round amble." None of "Teddy's" diversions had this smooth, easy motion; he did not have it himself, as he was too much the natural fighter and too positive in temperament. But they were hobbies to him nevertheless—from getting on the first page of newspapers to lion-hunting for the Smithsonian Institution, conversing with kings and potentates, dipping into the thousand-and-one kinds of literary endeavor, studying birds, mountain-climbing, writing about history, and making it.

The Andrew Jackson of his time was "T. R." He had less wildness, less temper, and more manners than the red-haired "Old Hickory" possessed. Furthermore, he never signed "O. K." under the impression that these were the initials of "Oll Korrekt." Nor did he equal Jackson's stunt of deciding the proposed location of the Treasury Building by striking the ground with his cane, instructing the boys to "put her there," and thus causing the bend in Pennsylvania avenue. But Roosevelt knew how to wield the "big stick" in Washington and the big gun in Africa.

Before the war former President Wilson could be seen on the golf links swinging zestfully at the tiny